

Conference Abstract

Delving Into Te Papa Research Expedition Data

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Abstract

The [Te Papa research expeditions project](#) was a 12-week pilot project, funded by [Wikimedia Aotearoa New Zealand](#) and supported by the [Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa](#). As Wikimedian in Residence at Te Papa, Siobhan Leachman trialled the draft [Wikidata schema](#) proposed by the [TDWG Expeditions Task Group](#), sharing research expedition data with Wikidata. This made the data globally accessible, showed Te Papa staff the benefits of using Wikidata, and laid groundwork for reusing Wikidata items in Te Papa's collection management system. Outreach events were organised for both staff and the public, and a final report was delivered. Project recommendations were reported back to the TDWG Expeditions Task Group and [Wikidata WikiProject Research Expeditions](#).

Background

Expeditions are a major source of objects in museums. Objects sourced from a single research expedition are often held by multiple institutions. Adding data on research expeditions to Wikidata empowers the unambiguous labelling of, and the creation of persistent identifiers for, these expeditions. Wikidata links research expeditions to other entities, providing easier access to information about participants, locations visited, and institutions that hold expedition-related content, as well as publications, archives, images and artworks generated by such expeditions (von Mering 2023). Understanding research expeditions can highlight colonial origins of museum collections and help address resulting impacts (Das and Lowe 2018).

Work undertaken

A Wikidata project page and a [Wikidata item](#) were created for [WikiProject Te Papa Research Expeditions](#). This enabled the adding of [on focus list of Wikimedia project](#) statements to appropriate research expedition items. This, along with the creation of Wikidata queries, empowered progress tracking of the project.

Research was undertaken using the [Te Papa Collections Online website](#), Te Papa library and archives, and digital libraries such as the [Biodiversity Heritage Library](#) and the [Wikipedia Library](#). Te Papa staff were interviewed. Wikidata items for expeditions were created or enriched and linked to newly created or existing items for participants, organisations, locations, ships and publications (Fig. 1). A presentation was given to Te Papa staff on the project (Leachman 2024). Two Wikipedia edit-a-thons were organised and a blog was published by Te Papa.



Figure 1.

Visualisation of the [Chatham Island Expedition 1954](#), Wikimedia Foundation, [CC BY-SA 4.0](#).

Challenges

The initial challenge was to scope the project. It was decided the project should cover any expedition where Te Papa or its predecessors were involved, where staff were

participants or had published about an expedition or its collections, or where Te Papa holds publications or archives relating to, or specimens collected during, an expedition.

There is no agreed definition for a research expedition, so a set of questions was drafted to guide decisions on Wikidata item creation (Fig. 2). These were shared with the TDWG Expeditions Task Group and WikiProject Research Expeditions to help create an agreed definition for research expeditions and add this to best practice documentation (Leachman and Schrader 2024).

Examples of questions that can guide an editor deciding whether a particular trip or journey is a research expedition include the following:

- Has the event been specifically referred to as a research expedition?
- Is there a specified research aim for the journey?
- Are participants travelling to a destination?
- Do collected specimens or objects use an assigned series of collection numbers?
- Do specimen or object labels specify an expedition?
- Did the event require discrete organisation, funding or sponsorship?
- Are there organisations affiliated to the event?
- Are there definable start and end dates?
- Were collecting permits or similar documentation required and/or obtained?
- Did the event result in an expedition report or publication?

Figure 2.

[Research expedition questions](#), Siobhan Leachman, [CC0](#).

As no comprehensive list of Te Papa's research expeditions had ever been compiled, this had to be derived from the sources outlined above. This effort took a significant portion of the project's time.

The project raised data sovereignty issues regarding Indigenous knowledge embedded in expedition data. Discussions were held with Te Papa's Mātauranga Māori team and their guidance was that these cases need to be worked through with the relevant Indigenous community, following [Te Papa's principle of Mana Taonga](#) as well as the [CARE Principles for Indigenous Data Governance](#) and the [Māori Data Governance Model](#).

Outcomes

The project confirmed the draft Wikidata schema worked well and adapted to different types of research expeditions. Te Papa staff produced [a partial mapping](#) between the schema and EMu, Te Papa's Collection Management System, allowing the creation of EMu party records for each expedition and the roundtripping of identifiers using the [Te Papa agent ID property](#). Lucy Schrader created a Wikipedia [Infobox expedition template](#), which creates an infobox in research expedition English Wikipedia articles generated from Wikidata. A [project report](#) was produced and includes recommendations

of how to replicate this project. This report was shared with Te Papa, the TDWG Expeditions Task group, Wikimedia communities, and other interested parties.

Keywords

Wikidata, Wikipedia, Wikimedia

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Conflicts of interest

The authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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